

CAROLINE FINDS HER WAY
by
Nelia Gardner White

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A Jen Culliton Story

HV2345 w) Caroline Finds Her Way

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY HERMAN PFEIFER

WHEN Jen Culliton brought her sister's four children from their motherless home to her great lonely farm, she got far more than she bargained for. She expected worry and work and fussing. But for an insignificant outlay of money and what was, to her, a small outlay of strength, she received youth and laughter, loving dependence, mischief and joy, to live continually with her.

Not the least of these was laughter. There hadn't been much time for laughter in Jen's busy life and, besides, she had been alone for so many years, and lone folks don't laugh much.

There hadn't been much to laugh about when she'd been left with two babies after Steve's losing fight with pneumonia, nor in the long struggling years before the children were grown. Nor in the bleak days after her son, Phil, died, 'way out West. Nor in the feeling of isolation and unwantedness after she had made the Culliton farm the best place in Alleghany County, only to be told that she hadn't the strength to work it like a man any more. She had a small, dry grin that was reflected in a slight crinkling of the eyelids, but laughter—that had been foreign to her.

But with Caroline, Ollie and Joe, and little blind Peter in possession of the old house, Jen learned laughter. Not from Peter, perhaps—his very happiness brought tears to your eyes. But Ollie and Joe kept chuckles eternally rising.

And Caroline! It was Caroline who was Jen's greatest joy. She had a humor to match Jen's own, dry but keen. Her

gray eyes snapped with youth and devilment. Just the swing of her straight boyish body as she came up over the hill from school made pleased laughter well up within.

"**YOU** ought to have a tractor!" she announced her first summer there. "The horses, they've done pretty good," Jen said dryly. "And who in tunket around here'd run a tractor, anyhow? Zeb's no hand with machinery." "I'll run it," Caroline said casually. Jen gasped.

It was Jen herself to a "T," but Jen had never really seen herself in a mirror before. It was after she got the tractor that she was out in the barn one day and heard Caroline outside, talking to the machine.

"Why, you ornery little devil!" Caroline was saying exasperatedly. "What've you been doing with your in'ards, anyway? Did you swallow that screw? Did you? Why, you greasy old ignoramus, stop your coughing in my face like that! Run, dog-gone you! Do you think I'm going to tell Aunt Jen I can't make you go? . . . Oh, *sweet baby*, there you spin!"

Jen sat down on a bag of potatoes and shook with mirth. And when Caroline ran the tractor into a tree up in the north lot, trying to see how fast she could make it across the field and back, she laughed again, though it cost twenty-three dollars and fifty cents to get the machine fixed.

Caroline came straight to Jen that time, but Jen knew, by the little quivering pulse in the girl's throat, that she was frightened. She brought it out baldly, though.

When Caroline ran the tractor into a tree up in the north lot, Jen laughed, though it cost twenty-three dollars and fifty cents to get the machine fixed

"Tillie" (that was the tractor), "Tillie thought she was a squirrel!" she said.

Caroline went to college that first fall. "I'd just as soon stay here, Aunt Jen," she said, a little stubbornly. Jen warmed to that, but she was quite firm about it.

"No; you need to be made more lady-like," she said. "You'll be another Jen Culliton if you don't look out!"

"Well, I wouldn't mind," Caroline said, soberly for her, as she stared out the back window at the goldenrod and asters August-fringing the orchard.

"Fiddlesticks!" said Jen. "Nobody wants to know the neighbors are laughing when you go by, saying, 'There goes that big horse, Jen Culliton. Wonder she wouldn't wear skirts instead of overalls when she's on the public highway!' I never had a chance to get my awkward bumps knocked off; and here you are running around the fields and hills like a wild deer! No, you got to go to college, Caroline! I've hired a dressmaker from town, the new one that folks say is real good; and we're going to get your clothes in shape this week!"

JEN laughed all through that session, and others, of dressmaking. Caroline was so impatient of furbelows.

"Oh, not a sash! Aunt Jen—if you make me have a fussy thing like that, I'll flunk every exam, the first term!" she burst out once. But when she saw the disappointment behind Jen's amusement, she pretended to be resigned.

"Oh, well—if you want me to make a ninny of myself!" she conceded. "I'll look awkward as a rail fence, but maybe it's necessary for my social development."

But the last day before she went away she put on some shabby knickers and an old sweater and went off up the hill all alone. She was gone three hours, and Jen saw, when she came back, that there were tear streaks on her cheeks. Jen was finishing the packing of her trunk when

Seven Causes Of Sleeplessness

If you are troubled with insomnia, look for one or more of these causes.

Popular delusions in regard to sleep, and practical directions
for successfully wooing "Nature's sweet restorer"

By William S. Sadler, M. D.

IN MY years of practice as a physician, I have found that nine persons out of ten—yes, ninety-nine persons out of one hundred—exaggerate the importance of sleep. They keep themselves awake worrying over *being* awake.

They seem to think that their health depends on having a certain amount of sleep every night. In fact, a good many people actually think they will go crazy if they fail to get this regular amount of sleep.

I admit that if you suffer from insomnia for a prolonged period, it will not help either your health or your happiness. You will be likely to lose weight, to feel fatigued, and to be below par in efficiency.

But you will find that Mother Nature is on the job. In an ordinary case of insomnia, where there are no serious complications, she will see that you get enough sleep to avoid a breakdown.

You may have two or three wakeful nights, even half a dozen. But then there will come a night when you will sleep fairly well; or you may find that you "just can't keep awake" in the daytime—and you will get a more or less prolonged nap.

As I said before, unless there are serious complications, Mother Nature will see that you get enough of her much-advertised "sweet restorer" to prevent development of any real trouble.

The first point I want to impress on you is this: Your fatigue of mind and of body, after a wakeful night, is not due to the sleeplessness itself. It is chiefly the result of your *worry* over not sleeping.

Sleep certainly is desirable, because it is the most perfect form of rest. But you need to realize that ordinary rest, even without the unconsciousness of sleep, will have much the same effect. Moreover, if you allow yourself to enjoy rest without worry, you will be almost sure to go to sleep!

I shall have more to say about this further on; but first let us find out how we become victims to the bugbear of insomnia. Here are its seven common causes:

1. Disorders of the circulation, high blood pressure, anemia, and so on.
2. Organic diseases, such as asthma, brain tumors, and Bright's disease.
3. Toxic conditions; as acidemia and goiter.

4. Faults in diet, as late suppers and overeating.

5. Overfatigue of mind or of body.

6. Nervous exhaustion, brain fag, and other disorders of the nervous system.

7. Chronic worry, definite fears, nervous and muscular tension, and similar states of mind and of body.

Now, if you are a persistent sufferer from insomnia, one fact should be clear to you: The first thing to be done is to find out which of these seven causes is responsible in your case. Perhaps more than one cause is at work. Have a competent and careful diagnosis of your

Another case was that of a young woman stenographer. For a year or two she had been feeling constantly tired, with mild attacks of headache; but she didn't consult a physician until she began to suffer from insomnia.

I found that she had a blood pressure of barely one hundred and that she was decidedly anemic. She was given iron injections and was put on a diet rich in iron—spinach, yolk of egg, tomatoes, oranges, and so on—and in time the anemic condition began to be corrected. As it improved, her insomnia became less troublesome; and when her blood had been brought up to normal she was relieved of her sleeplessness.

These cases show that insomnia may be a symptom of a definite disorder of the circulation. It is found also in connection with certain organic diseases. These form the second group of insomniacs. In these cases, it is the disease itself that should be treated; and that is, of course, a matter requiring expert medical attention.

IN THE third group of insomniacs, as in the first two, sleeplessness may be a symptom of a definite disease. We find it, for example, in certain cases of goiter. Where it is associated with any disease, the treatment, of course, should be directed by a physician.

However, in this group may be included the people who are kept awake by tea

or coffee. Both these drinks should be avoided by anyone who has a tendency to insomnia.

Even the powders which many people take to produce sleep must be classed under the head of poisons. Used habitually, they defeat the very purpose for which they are taken.

One of my patients—a woman thirty-eight years of age—complained of various ailments, including persistent insomnia. I found that for fifteen years she had been taking sleeping powders. She always had two or three varieties on a table beside her bed; and if, half an hour after retiring, she was still awake, she would begin taking these powders.

It was not easy to cure her of this habit. I had to put a nurse in charge of her; for if she was left to herself, she would resort to the powders in spite of my orders. She had six very miserable weeks before her emancipation from the habit began to be (Continued on page 90)

When Night Comes Sidetrack Your Trains of Thought

A GREAT many people keep themselves awake by thinking," says Doctor Sadler. "They say they have insomnia, and that it is caused by some physical ailment, when, as a matter of fact, the only thing wrong with them is that they don't relax mentally. You can't sleep until you have relaxed physically, and you can't relax physically until you have relaxed mentally. After you have pulled up the covers, don't think about what you will do to-morrow, or what you ought to have done to-day. Don't allow your mind to concentrate on *anything*. Just let go mentally; that's the trick that will cure a lot of so-called insomnia. Sidetrack your trains of thought each night, and leave them idle until morning."

physical and mental state. You may find that your sleeplessness is only a bad habit. But you *may* find that it is a symptom of some definite and more or less serious disorder.

For example, I had one patient—a man sixty-three years old—who had been a happy and apparently healthy individual until about a year before he came to consult me.

At that time he began to have occasional attacks of dizziness. He paid little attention to these; but later he noticed that he was not sleeping well. This surprised him, and he sought relief from his insomnia.

I FOUND that he had a blood pressure of two hundred, which perhaps was due to the fact that he always had been a heavy eater. In his case, worry had nothing to do with his sleeplessness, for he had been happy and contented. His insomnia was a symptom associated with his very high blood pressure.

Caroline came and stood in the doorway. For the time, Caroline had lost her independence and her sense of humor.

"If Mother hadn't wanted it so, I'll be darned if I'd go!" she said, her young gay voice a husky whisper.

Jen straightened. "Why, honey," said she slowly, "you don't have to go if you feel like that!"

But Caroline had got it out, that word "Mother"—it was all she wanted. She'd never talked of her mother, had seemed happy enough this summer, but Jen saw now that the hurt had gone tragically deep. It wasn't *what* Caroline had said, but that she'd said anything, that her hurt had had to come out in some way.

"Your mother always was one to love books!" Jen said tenderly. "I remember once her trading a red hair ribbon for a book of fairy stories. My boy, Phil, he took after her."

That was like Jen, to know that to speak of her own hurt would ease Caroline's, if ever so little.

Caroline went through with the going all right after that. She had a great romp with the boys after supper and told Peter five stories. At the last minute she came up from the cellar, pretending to hide something behind her back.

"Well, I'm going to take it!" she laughed. "Do you think I want to starve down there?"

"It" was a jar of Jen's strawberry preserves.

SO JEN loved Caroline, and small wonder. She was a daughter such as Jen should have had.

Caroline wrote home from college that she had worn *the* dress to a dance, and that it was a knockout. "The men followed me about in droves," she said; "but tell Tillie I'm still true to her!"

Jen missed her enormously; but there were the twins and Peter, and she seemed to keep pretty busy, even though the heavy work of the farm was denied her now. Little Peter worshiped Caroline, and Jen found herself trying to make his loss up to him. She had never been much on stories, but she found that "Once, when I was a little girl" held a sure magic; and she was surprised to find how many, many things came clear to her out of childhood, and how pleasant the telling of them seemed.

And then, before she knew it, it was close to Christmas, and she found that it was almost worth while having Caroline away that they might have the joy of preparing for her return.

It was in Caroline's junior year that Jen grew troubled about her. There was Dan Martin, the boy who had worked his way through college and was back, slaving away alone on the old Martin place up the swale. There had never been any question about what Dan thought of Caroline, not since the first time he sat across from her at the little Corners church; but there was always a question as to what Caroline thought of Dan.

Jen had laughed about Dan at first, but when Caroline was about nineteen she saw it was not a laughing matter. Dan loved Caroline too much. And Jen liked the boy—he was so earnest, so good-looking, and he loved the farm so.

Caroline never seemed to care much about boys. There were generally plenty

of letters for her in the summer time, and one Christmas some red roses were delivered to her, 'way from the city. But Caroline answered a letter only occasionally, and once, when a handsome boy in a big car stopped at Jen's on a July day, Caroline said, "Oh, bother!" and ran off through the orchard with Ollie to go fishing.

Jen liked that, at first—had some good laughs over Caroline's indifference and independence. But once she came down to see about some windows after Caroline had come up to bed, and found Dan Martin still sitting on the front steps, a grotesque, tragically humped-over shadow in the night light.

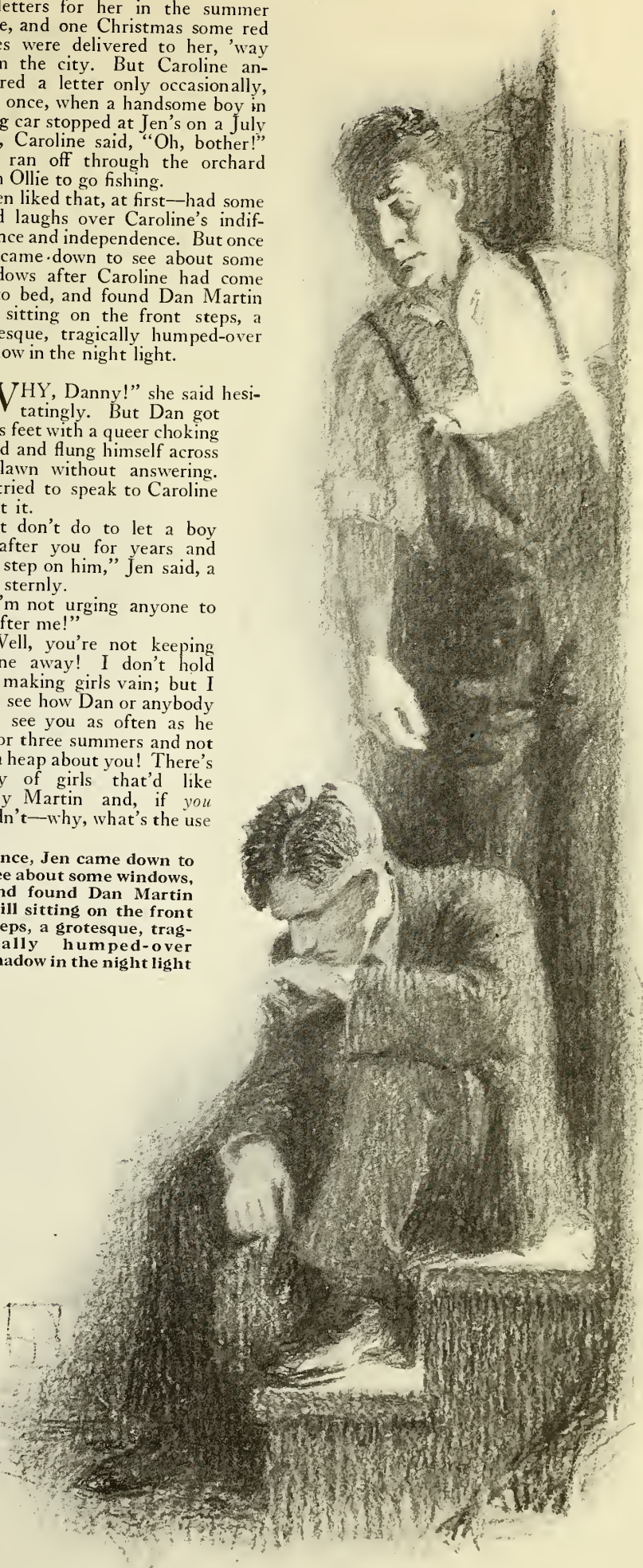
"WHY, Danny!" she said hesitatingly. But Dan got to his feet with a queer choking sound and flung himself across the lawn without answering. Jen tried to speak to Caroline about it.

"It don't do to let a boy tag after you for years and then step on him," Jen said, a little sternly.

"I'm not urging anyone to tag after me!"

"Well, you're not keeping anyone away! I don't hold with making girls vain; but I don't see how Dan or anybody could see you as often as he has for three summers and not care a heap about you! There's plenty of girls that'd like Danny Martin and, if *you* wouldn't—why, what's the use

Once, Jen came down to see about some windows, and found Dan Martin still sitting on the front steps, a grotesque, tragically humped-over shadow in the night light



of your being a dog in the manger?" "Dog in the manger!" echoed Caroline, flushing angrily. "Why, I've told him and told him not to come. He—he—why, he *knows* I don't want to marry—ever! He said he was willing to be just pals—like always!"

Jen looked at her, startled.

"Don't want to marry?" she said. "You mean just now—or ever?"

"Ever," repeated Caroline. "I want to teach. Oh, not regular high-school teaching, but in an agricultural school somewhere—make girls *love* farms, help turn out women that can manage land!"

"Why, Caroline," Jen said, touched, "that would be a great job for some—there's need for it; but that ain't your job! You mean, have a—a career, I take it. But you was meant for a farm of your own, Caroline, for babies and the like!"

"Babies?" queried Caroline scornfully. "And maybe be hurt, like Mother was about Peter, and maybe not be happy! Oh, you've had your chance, *you've* had a career!"

"Me? A career?"

"Well, haven't you? How do you know what's best? I heard this place used to be scrubby and run down and not good for much but huckleberries and rattlesnakes—and look what you've done with it! How do you *know* it's best to sit back and raise babies and watch the men-folks do the pleasant, big things?"

"Well, I do know," Jen said a little grimly. "I don't know as I can tell you, but I know. And Danny's a good boy, Caroline, he's an awful good boy! There aren't any hereabouts that's your equal in learning or gumption but Danny. You'd make a wonderful team, you two!"

Caroline turned away then without an answer, but Jen saw that her eyes were smoldering with anger. Jen felt uncomfortable, as if she had said too much. She tried afterward to show a little of her heart to Caroline.

"There was days when, from morning till night, I had to leave the baby with Phil—and he no more than a baby himself!" she said once. "Seemed, sometimes, as if I'd never pull through."

"Yes—but you did!" said Caroline.

JEN'S big heart cried out then with all the misery of those first hideous days without Steve, with the lonely ache that still surged through her at the thought of him, with the hurt of those long months of drudgery before she could spare time for the babies (and then to find them grown!). But words came slowly to Jen; she couldn't get this out to Caroline somehow. And, of course, she *had* made a success of the farm and had found pleasure in it.

When Dan Martin came and helped himself to her cookies as freely as Ollie or Joe, when he brought Caroline a coral pin for her birthday and she wouldn't take it, Jen could have taken Dan in her arms and cried over him. Dan was making good on the old farm, but he was making good slowly. He needed Caroline beside him. Jen wondered sometimes if she wasn't being plain selfish, maybe wanting Caroline to take Dan just so she'd be near her.

But she saw that Caroline, with all her youthful loveliness, was growing more brusque, more independent, more self-



They both became aware that Dan Martin was

sufficient as the months went by, and it hurt her. She tried to bring back memories out of her early married life for Caroline, to make her see that those were the things she clung to, not the evidences of her present prosperity.

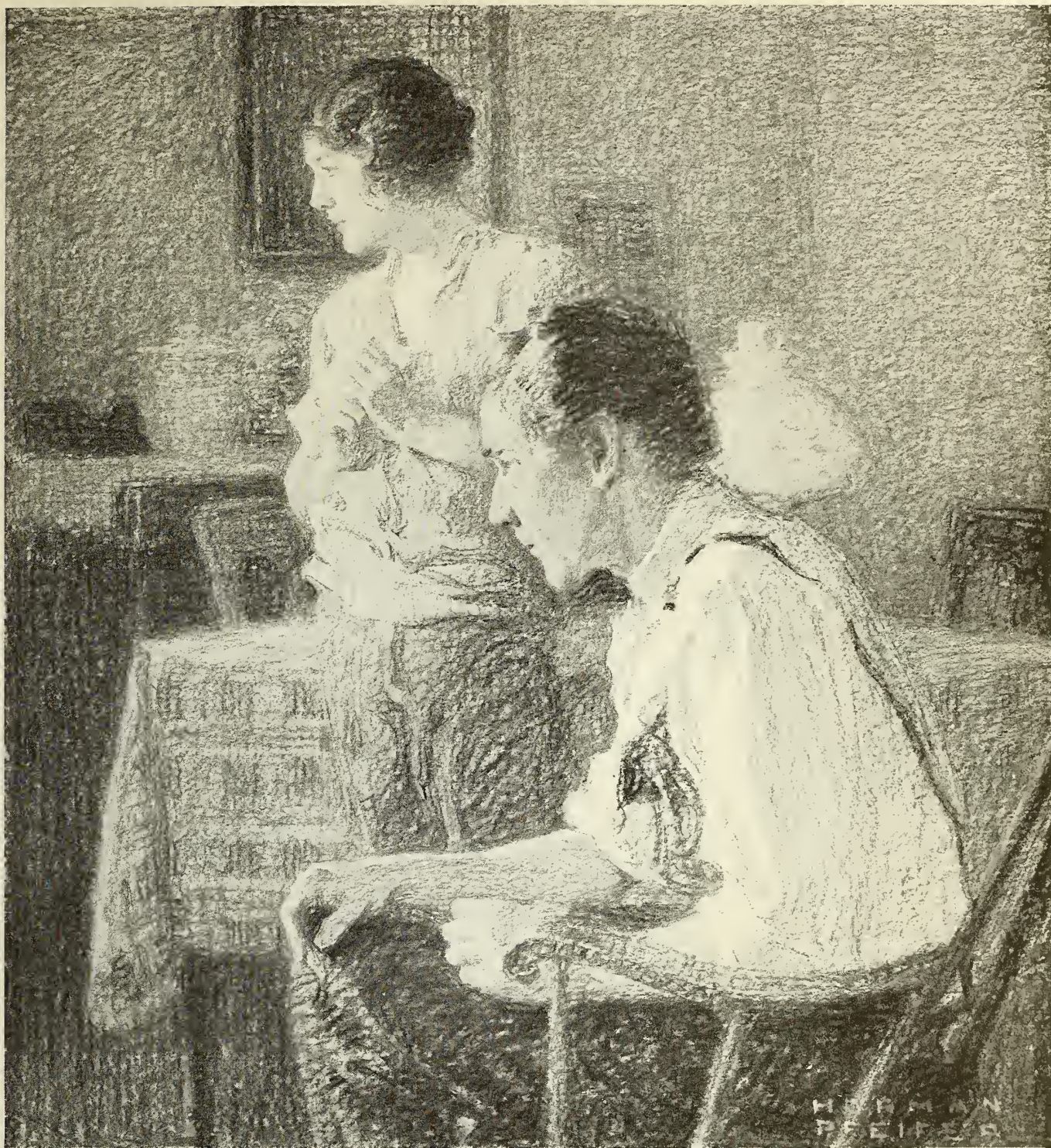
"That's the rocker I used to set in to rock Phil when he was sick one time," she said once. "He was a dreamy little boy, like Peter—seems as if boys like that have more heart. Phil always remembered my birthday and all the things I liked."

Or, "Steve and I set out that rosebush the fall before the baby came. We didn't have time for no honeymoon—we was married in planting season—and we had to make little places along from time to

time to fit together for a honeymoon. It—it was one of those times then."

But, though Caroline saw that Jen was hurting herself by telling these things, she didn't see just what it meant. She even thought that her Aunt Jen was getting on in years, calling to mind old things like that. Jen, with her clear, keen mind!

JEN saw what Caroline thought, and it grieved her. If she hadn't loved Caroline, so much—but she could see so clearly the lonely years ahead, she knew so well how the career would pall, be it ever so useful. And she knew that Dan Martin was the man for Caroline Crewe, and that some day Caroline was going to know it too.



not laughing. He stood in the doorway, staring at them, his eyes deep blue wells of hot flame

They had belonged together from the very first, from that summer when Dan had stepped up every Sunday night amid the laughter of the boys at the Corners church and asked to take Caroline home. When they were together in a room, there was a spark that seemed to flash from one to the other. Caroline, for all her cool, mocking friendliness, cared more for Dan than she would admit. If she could only be made to see!

Then Caroline and Dan had a quarrel. It was in September, just before Caroline was to go back for her last year at college. Tillie was at the root of it, really.

Dan had come over to see if the apple pickers would be through, to come up to his place next day. Caroline came in from

the field, where she had been helping with the plowing for winter wheat, just as Dan stood in the doorway talking to Jen. Caroline was laughing as she hurried toward them, but her cheeks stung with an angry red.

"**W**ANT a hammer and a couple of boards!" she announced briefly, and then she began to laugh again, laugh till she almost cried. Jen and Dan laughed with her before they even knew the cause.

"Oh, Aunt Jen—it's that old Bert Pettigrew! He came over from his place—you know where the fence gaps there—and he—he asked me to marry him! That old skinflint! And—and I got so mad—he put his old hand on my arm—and I—I told

him to get off your land—and when he didn't go, I—I chased him through the fence with Tillie!"

Jen laughed till she was weak, sinking down, exhausted, into the old red-padded rocker by the kitchen stove. Old Bert Pettigrew, who always had his own way, and Caroline, chugging threateningly after him with Tillie!

Then they both became aware that Dan Martin was not laughing. He stood in the doorway, staring at them, his eyes deep blue wells of hot flame.

"Blame funny joke!" he said finally. "Darn funny! I could split my sides over how I've loved you and how you've laughed at me! I beg to inform you, however, that (Continued on page 78)

"I Nearly Died Of Envy!"

This is a common expression, but in my case it was literally true—I thought I was suffering from "nerves," but my real disease was envy, the cancer that eats men's minds and hearts

AS IS customary in many other businesses, we pay a bonus to our principal employees at the end of every year. Formerly, we treated everybody alike. That is to say, in a year when our profits were good we would add ten per cent to every salary; in less prosperous years the amount might be eight per cent or even five per cent; but whatever it was all shared equally.

When this program had been in effect for a number of years, we found that it was no longer an incentive. The man who had done extraordinarily well received the same percentage as the man who had delivered only what his job required; and both men, assuming that the reward would come anyway, figured it as a part of their budgets, and frequently pledged it mentally in advance.

So we introduced an element of surprise by announcing that we should reappraise each individual at the end of every year, and that the percentage of his bonus would indicate our measure of his production. The high figure would be raised to fifteen per cent, and men who had done superlative work would receive it; others would share our earnings in proportion to the *extra* amount which they had contributed, and those who had failed to show any special initiative would know our judgment of them by their failure to receive anything at all.

The announcement of the new plan was made in January three years ago, and the first payments were at Christmas time. On the day after Christmas, five men were waiting to see me when I reached the office. Gordon Emmerich—a fictitious name, of course, as are all the others I shall use—was first in line; but I asked him to come back at the end of the day. The other four I could deal with quickly, for they were men of minor importance to our firm, and the shock of receiving small bonuses when they had counted on large ones would either stir them up to real progress or demonstrate that they had nothing in them to be stirred up.

But Emmerich was different. If he could be saved he would be our most valuable man in ten years, and I believed that I could save him. So I asked him to take dinner with me at the club, and we sparred across the table for an hour; he hoping that I would open the real subject, and I determined that he should do it. When the coffee and cigars arrived, he braced himself and jumped in.

"I guess you know what's on my mind, Mr. Horton," he said. "The bonus—it was a good punch right between the eyes, and I suppose you meant it to be. But, frankly, I don't quite understand."

"No?" I murmured, being polite but not a bit helpful.

"It isn't the loss of the money," he continued, "though I'll admit I could have used it. But I thought that I was making

a pretty good record. My territory shows an increase over last year."

"Every territory shows an increase," I interrupted bluntly.

"Yes, but mine was above the average. I keep a pretty good line on what the others are doing and—" There was deep trouble in his eyes, and I felt genuinely sorry, but I had made up my mind that he must fight it through alone. "Maybe you think I'm not suited to the drug business," he finished lamely.

"I think you're admirably suited to it," I answered.

HE THREW out his hands in a little gesture of hopelessness, and then it came, the thing that I had been waiting for.

"I can't figure it out!" he exclaimed. "I don't pretend to be any world beater, but I have a good college background and a fair personality, and I can sell goods, if I do say it myself. And how fellows like Weed and Peters can pull down fifteen per cent bonuses while I get nothing—well, it's beyond me. I'm not criticizing them, you understand, but . . . honestly, Mr. Horton, I'm stumped. What's the answer, anyway?"

"You've given the answer," I said.

"I've given it? I don't know what you mean."

"How did you know that Weed and Peters got fifteen per cent bonuses?"

He flushed. "Why—why, one of the chaps in the accounting department told me. I don't think I ought to repeat his name; but there was nothing improper about it. A man naturally likes to know how he stacks up with his competitors."

"You have no competitors," I said.

"Oh, that's hardly true," he protested. "Every man in business is in competition—"

"With himself," I finished. "Every man is really a combination of several men. He's half a dozen different personalities. If he is effectively organized *inside* himself he keeps all his different personalities working in unison, their eyes on the same goal. The disorganized man lets them stray all over the lot. You are one of the most disorganized men I have ever known," I went on brutally. "Only one of your personalities is working in your territory; another is working Weed's territory, and another is working Peters's; another is fussing around the job of your college room-mate, and the others are visiting the offices and homes of whatever men happen to get their names in the newspapers as recipients of good luck."

He could not decide whether I was making fun of him or had taken leave of my senses. I got up from the table, and he followed me in a bewildered fashion down the elevator and into the library. We found a couple of comfortable chairs near the window.

"I am going to tell you a story, Gordon," I began. "It is really three stories

—yours, my own, and the story of poor old Doc Witherspoon. I've wanted to tell it to you ever since you came into the business, but I've kept putting it off, for two reasons: First, because it is pretty personal, and no man likes to open up his own past to inspection except in a case of necessity, and, second, because you had to be thoroughly jolted before my treatment would have a fair chance to work.

"You wonder if I am a little off my trolley when I talk about your six personalities, and tell you that five of them have been wandering all over the lot, while the sixth worked your territory in only a perfunctory fashion. Believe me, my trolley is right where it ought to be, and my wheels are solid on the tracks. You've been with the company now a little over two years, and I've talked with you maybe twenty times. I have a distinct recollection of exactly what happened at each of those interviews. Have you?"

"Why, no, sir, I can't say that I have. Of course, we talked about the business, but I can't repeat the exact words."

"I'M NOT referring to the words," I said. "I can't recall those, either. What I do recall is the picture of your mind which you left with me after each interview. The first time was when I hired you. I asked you about your ambitions, and your college experiences, and what sort of friends you had made. You talked about your friends in some detail, and about your room-mate in particular. His father is president of a big concern in Omaha, and the boy stepped right out of college into the family fortune. I remember the expression you used: It was 'pretty soft for him,' you said."

"The next time we met was one Saturday afternoon at the ball park. You knew much more than I did about the standing of the clubs and the ability of the various players. But what you knew most about was their salaries; and I recall that you told me about a chap who graduated only one year ahead of you, and is now making ten thousand dollars a year playing professional ball."

"Our third meeting was at the annual sales convention. Some prizes were distributed; but none came to you, which was natural enough, for you were the youngest and had been in the field only a little while. But I overheard your comment to another man as the meeting broke up. You said you wished you could have a chance at a good territory like Peters's or Weed's. It was pretty nice, you said, to handle the big trade in the big cities. You'd like to see what one of them would do in a tough part of the world like yours."

I stopped to light a cigar, and out of the corner of my eye I saw the red creeping up around his ears.

"I think I begin to understand what you mean," he said, and his tone was very

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(Continued from page 45)

there'll never arise any necessity for you to *chase me with Tillie!*"

He turned and went down the back steps and home. Perhaps you wouldn't call it a quarrel, for that was all there was of it. But Dan did not come near the house again that fall, not even to say good-by when Caroline went back to college.

Along about Thanksgiving time Caroline wrote that the very chance she had wanted was hers. It would mean she had to go out to Indiana; but it was a small college and she was to have a free hand.

Caroline was young, of course; but she was stubborn, she was enthusiastic, she hung onto her ideas as burdocks hung onto Nip. And there was that leaning toward bossing, toward over-independence. Things like that grow on one. And some day—maybe not yet, but in the years past thirty or forty—Caroline was going to know she'd been wrong. If only she could show her, somehow!

Jen wrote a letter to Caroline about it. "I'd rather, a million times over, have been your mother, Caroline, even to going young as she did, than to be your Aunt Pen or your Aunt Julie! They think life's some kind of show, to squeeze fun out of—not to put themselves into," she wrote.

Caroline would have liked that, but she never saw it, for it looked kind of senseless to Jen after she'd written it, and she tore it up.

Then, before she got down on paper anything that she thought remotely expressed her feelings, Caroline was home for Christmas.

Jen hoped, during the drive from the station, that Caroline was remembering last Christmas—Dan Martin bringing her up to the house through the first big snowfall. But Caroline didn't mention Dan. She didn't need to.

"Ollie and me cut the tree ourselves!" Joe announced excitedly.

"I helped draw it down!" came Peter's huskily sweet voice.

"There's packages for you, bushels of 'em!" said Ollie. "There was one on the porch this morning—bet it was from Dan!"

Jen saw Caroline's fingers tighten on the edge of the robe, and she chuckled a little inside. She noted, too, that Caroline opened the package that night, though she left the rest till Christmas morning. But it was only a towel from one of the girls who went to the Corners church.

IT WAS the next night, Christmas Eve, when there came a frightened pounding on the kitchen door. The twins and Peter were in bed, and Caroline and Jen were starting on the tree. The trimming of the tree, after so many treeless years, was a very precious time to Jen.

When the pounding came at the door, Jen turned from the shining warm beauty of the tree regretfully, then expectantly. Maybe it was Danny! But it was not Dan.

Jen came back to Caroline hurriedly. "It's Katie Burgameyer's girl. Katie's time's come, and she can't get the doctor—he's off up Norwich way and they can't

reach him—she wants as I should come."

"Shall—shall I come too?" Caroline asked quickly.

Jen hesitated just a second.

"Mebbe you better," she said then, slowly. "Poor Katie—kind of pitiful to have a baby after the father's dead. Don't know how she gets on!"

They hurried into their things, looked in to see if the children were all asleep, and went out down the snow-sprinkled road beside little Gretchen Burgameyer.

"Mebbe I'm doing wrong," thought Jen. "Mebbe I oughtn't to take her, mebbe it'll just make things worse."

But before she could think much they were there at the Burgameyer's little four-room house, and she was ordering Caroline swiftly to do this and that, as if this were not the first time she had performed this service for a neighbor woman.

Caroline had known death, but not birth. And she had never known real poverty—not poverty that meant bare floors in winter, no pictures, nothing but the barest necessities. Even the baby things that she took from the old broken dresser were coarse, used-before garments. But they were very clean, and they were strangely small and sweet.

THE hour was a confused time of pain, and a sick horror that such agony must be endured. Jen saw that Caroline was greatly moved, and she wondered more than once if she'd done right to bring her.

Then, suddenly, Jen felt ill and shaken herself. Katie Burgameyer had come triumphantly up from the valley of the shadow, back to the life in the bare little room, and with four instead of three fatherless babies to feed and clothe.

Jen sat down weakly.

"You'll have to—to wash and dress the baby, Caroline," she said. "My old heart's kind of gone back on me again. Everything's ready—the olive oil's on the table—"

So Caroline, in search of a career, washed and dressed the Burgameyer baby. Awkward, unbelievably awkward she was, she who handled tennis rackets, horses, tractors, with grace! Slow too—and frightened.

She saw that Caroline's sure fingers trembled in their task more than once. And once, when she couldn't seem to get a small arm into a tiny sleeve, Jen saw, by the light of the kerosene lamp, something that glistened on Caroline's cheek. Her own lids smarted as Caroline came to the bed, carrying the baby.

Katie Burgameyer weakly took the baby into the shelter of her tired arm.

"He looks like Ed!" she said in a whisper. Then, turning her face suddenly away, "I wish Ed could have seen him!"

But her eyes came back to the small red face, came back lovingly, hopefully, bravely. Inside of two weeks Katie might be taking in washings again, maybe grumbling about the load she had to carry through life, but nevertheless she was beautiful now in her love and her hope for this little new burden.

Then, as if prearranged by a divine hand, there were soft voices outside, then music—the young folks from the Corners' church, singing Christmas carols.

"There's a song in the air,
There's a star in the sky;
There's a mother's deep prayer
And a baby's low cry!
And the star rains its fire—"

It was all just the same in the little Burgameyer house—bare and unlovely and poor. But there was Katie's face on the pillow; there was the light on the red tablecloth; and there was Caroline, straight and strong and lovely, standing by the bed, listening.

An old verse she had known in Sunday-school came to Jen—

And the glory of the Lord shone round about—

The doctor came then, bringing Katie's sister from town, and Jen and Caroline were out again in the crisp night. They didn't talk much. Once Jen did say, "Guess I'll dress another chicken, for the Burgameyers!" And then, "The singing came in kind of pretty, didn't it?"

When they were at the road that led up the swale, Caroline stopped.

"I—I'm going to walk up to the Martin place," she said honestly. "There's something I've got to tell Dan—before Christmas!"

"All right," Jen answered, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, and went on alone toward the house.

Inside the house she went first to look in at the children, then she turned to the 'phone, called Dan Martin. There was no answer. Jen turned away, a little troubled. She had wanted Dan to meet Caroline half way and now, maybe, if he wasn't there, Caroline would find it hard to get the courage again.

She went to the window and looked out into the star-strewn, snow-dusted Christmas Eve. Then, down the road, she saw coming two figures—yes, it was Caroline's white sweater and tam! and Dan, big, good Dan Martin.

JEN'S heart leaped. Dan must have been coming anyway! He had met her half way! Then the two figures paused by the roadside. Jen could see quite plainly two dark arms against the white sweater, a dark head bent.

She turned away, began quickly to string up tinsel and bright balls. But she felt uplifted, as if she had been vouchsafed a glimpse of infinity—straight, strong young Carolines, lovers of the soil, taking up the work of the Jen Cullitons, ever finding their Dan Martins to love and their old Martin farms to reclaim for the glory of planting time and harvest!

Jen's big hand on a little red stocking was unsteady, but she smiled contentedly. From very far away it seemed to her she could hear the echo of the carol:

"And the star rains its fire,
While the Infinite sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem
Cradles a King!"

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